ral Gas Commission invited two tenders, one for charter hire of 4 deep drilling rigs and the second 1or charter hire of two shallow drilling rigs from Indian entrepreneurs.

(b) and (c) No. Sir. Quotations were received from 15 Indian firms in respect of the first tender out of which the offer of only 10 firms were found tchnically suitable. Offers from 13 firms were received in respect of the second tender. Their technical bids are under scrutiny.

Setting up of second digital switching factory

666. SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken any decision for the setting up of the second digital switching factory;

(b) if so, what is the name of the foreign collaborator and where the unit is to be located; and

(c) what are the numbers and names of private Indian companies which are in the run for setting up of digital switching units?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA): (a) and (b) Government had decided in principle to set up the second Switching factory at Bangalore under Indian Telephone Industries, using the same technology as for the first factory at Mankapur. The details are under consideration.

(c) As per the present policy, switching equipment for Public Network can be manufactured in Units with majority Government participation only.

Gas struck in Arabian Sea

667. SHRI ADINARAYANA REDDY: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that gas has been struck in the first well drilled on the Arabian Sea;

(b) if so, what are the details there of and what are the plans for its utilisation; and

(c) by when it is likely to be ready for economic exploration?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM (SHRI NAWAL KISHORE SHARMA): (a) to (c) The exploration for hydrocarbons is in progress in different basins in the Arabian Sea namely, Kutch-Saurashtra, Bombay High Region and Kerala Konkon. Gas has been struck in South Base in and several other small fields. It is proposed to utilise this gas to meet the feedstock requirement of fertilizer and petro-chemical plants for extraction of LPG and for power generation.

Production of LPG in the country

668. SHRI ADINARAYANA REDDY: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM be pleased to state:

(a) what are the plans formulated for increasing reduction of L. P. G. in the country during the next three years; and

(b) what is the gap between the demand and supply of LPG at present?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM (SHRI NAWAL KISHORE SHARMA): (a) The Oil Industry has plans to increase LPG production in country from the present level (1984-85)

of 962,000 tonnes per annum to 1.8 million tonnes annum by 1987-88.

(b) According to estimates in the Oil Economy Budget proposal for 1985-86 LPG supply will be 1.188 million tonnes against a damand of 1.250 million tonnes, leaving a gap of 62,000 million tonnes.

Release of LPG connections

669. SHRI K. VASUDEVA PANICKER: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM be pleased to state:

(a) the number of cooking gas connections released during the last two years; year-wise;

(b) whether a large number of persons have been on the waiting list for LPG connections: and

(c) if so, what steps have been taken by the Government to clear the backlog?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM (SHRI NAWAL KISHORE SHARMA): (a) The oil companies have released about 16.50 lakh and 15 lakh LPG (cooking gas) connections during 1983-84 and 1984-85 respectively.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. Oil Companies have planned to release 17.5 lakh gas connections during 1985-86. Release of new LPG connections in future years would be made keeping in view LPG availability, augmentation of bottling capacity, and other infrastructure facilities.

Demand for petroleum products in domestic market

670. SHRI K. VASUDEVA PANICKER: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM be pleased to state:

(a) what is the anticipated demand for petroleum products in the domestic market by the end of the Seventh Five-Year Plan period;

(b) whether the production of crude is likely to meet the demands of petroleum products during the same period; and

(c) if not, what measures are proposed to be taken by the Government to obviate the shortfall?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM (SHRI NAWAL KISHORE SHARMA): (a) About 54 million tonnes.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) The shortfall is expected to be met by import of crude and petroleum products.

Press telegrams despatched by Journalists

671. DR. BAPU KALDATE: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a number of Press telegrams were despatched by the Journalists from Eastern Court telegraph office and P.I.B. Telegraph Office late in the evening on the 8th July, 1985; and some of them were detained; and

(b) if so, what are the details thereof; indicating the reasons for detaining these telegrams?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA): (a) On 8-7-1985 a total of Six press telegrams, three each from Eastern Court and Shastri Bhawan PIB Telegraph offices, had been despatched by Journalists. None of these had been detained.

(b) Does not arise, Sir.